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*John Smith*

CON TRO V E R S Y

BETWEEN

NEW-YORK TRIBUNE

AND

GERRIT SMITH.

...

NEW-YORK:

PRINTED BY JOHN A. GRAY, 95 & 97 CLIFF ST., COR. FRANKFORT.

1855.



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# CONTROVERSY.

## MR. SMITH'S FIRST LETTER.

PETERBORO, July 17, 1855.

*To the New-York Tribune :*

I have just read what you say of me in your yesterday's number.

The press constantly takes great liberties with my name:—but, I believe, the public will bear me witness, that I am patient with these liberties, and do very rarely complain of them. Even with *your* frequent and gross and influential misrepresentations of me I have borne uncomplainingly : but I can be silent under them no longer.

So you have, at last, been compelled to admit, that I “ was present in the House of Representatives on the night of the passage of the Nebraska bill, and voted against it.” I wish you had made the admission a year ago. Had you done so, I should probably have been saved the necessity of making a thousand oral and written answers to those, who have questioned me in respect to my vote on that bill. As it was you, who, more than all others, created the well-nigh universal belief that I was not in the House that night, your early correction of your misrepresentations would, pretty certainly, have done more to dispel such belief than could have been done to that end by all others.

Late, however, as your admission has come, I am nevertheless thankful for it. Over-burdened as I am with labors, I rejoice in the prospect that no more of my time will be consumed in giving such answers, as I have referred to. My more joyful prospect doubtless, in the esteem of some, is, that I shall now be restored to good standing, as an anti-slavery man. But let me here say, once for all, that I care not a farthing for their opinion of my anti-slavery character, who judge of it by my vote against the Nebraska bill. That was the most popular vote I ever gave ; and all the Northern members, who voted against it, afforded about as much proof, in so voting, of self-denial, as they would have done, in submitting to the necessity of eating strawberries and cream. I add, that the credit which people give them for “ backbone,” on account of their having voted against the Nebraska bill, shows that the people have not yet imbibed the first true idea of the brave and stupendous and self-sacrificing work of abolishing American slavery. The only members of Congress, who, by voting against

the Nebraska bill, earned the least part of a title to the reputation of having "back-bone," were the few intrepid ones of the South. Indeed, I must insist, that the Northern members, who, in voting for the bill, voted against the aroused Northern sentiment, might far rather be credited with "back-bone" than we, who voted with that sentiment.

But no more in regard to my vote on the Nebraska bill. What, it seems, the records of Congress could not establish, the *Tribune* will, I trust, be found to have established. I trust, that, henceforward, all, who have refused to believe it on the authority of the records of Congress, will, on the authority of the *Tribune*, believe that I did, indeed, vote against the Nebraska bill. I wish the *Tribune* would, also, authorize the belief that I made a speech, as well as cast a vote, against that bill. And I wish this so strongly, that I now tell it to draw on me for three hundred dollars (\$300,) in case it shall consent to put that speech into the hands of its one hundred and fifty or two hundred thousand subscribers. Possibly in this speech—the only one ever made in Congress to prove, that slavery is both a piracy and an outlaw—an abomination, which never has been law, and which never can be law—there may be found some little evidence of that "back-bone," which your columnrs have repeatedly charged me with lacking.

And, now, that you have ceased to misrepresent me on one point, and have confessed that I really did vote against the Nebraska bill, I hope you will travel on a little further in the way of justice, and not let your relentings cease, until you have confessed your deep wrong against me on another point also.

All others put together have not done so much, as you have done, to give currency to the report, that whilst in Congress, I was guilty not only of deserting the cause of freedom, but of deserting it for the sake of the petty self-indulgence of saving a few hours of sleep. To the facts in the case.

When the time had arrived for taking the vote on the Nebraska bill, its opponents proposed to combine for the purpose of preventing the taking of it. In other words, they believed, that there was now an occasion which would justify them in blocking the wheels of government, and in unfurling the flag of revolution, even on the floor of Congress. I dissented from them. Yes, I had even "back-bone" enough to stand *alone* in my dissent. The argument, which I employed with my excellent friends Chase and Sumner and with other members of Congress to justify this dissent, contained not one word on the subject of my sleep. The substance of it I shortly after gave to my constituents, in a printed letter; and you commented on it. That argument you were bound to receive, as my own justification of my course; and you had no right, for the purpose of making me ridiculous, or for any other purpose, to substitute for it the coinage either of your own, or of any other body's, fancy. Here follows a copy of the argument:

"I refused to become a party to the plan for preventing the taking of the vote on the Nebraska bill. This refusal was a great grief to the abolitionists in both Houses of Congress: and I scarcely need say, that I love them too well not to grieve in their grief. Nevertheless, I had

to persist in the refusal, and in standing alone. The wisest of men and the best of men, entreated me, over and over again, by my regard for my reputation, and by all that is precious in the cause of freedom, not to persevere in this singularity. Nevertheless—and, that, too, notwithstanding obstinacy had never been imputed to me—I was immovable. How could I be moved when it was my convictions, that fastened me to my position? Years before, in the calm studies of my secluded home, I had adopted the democratic theory—not nominally and coldly and partially—but really and earnestly and fully: and the conclusions, which I had arrived at, in circumstances so favorable for arriving at just conclusions, I was entirely unwilling to repeal, in a season of excitement and temptation. I spoke of the democratic theory. But the soul of that theory is the majority principle. Hence, to violate this principle is to abandon that theory. I was frequently told, that those rules of the House, in the expert use of which the taking of the vote on the Nebraska bill could be staved off indefinitely, were made for the very purpose of enabling the minority to hold the majority at bay, whenever it might please to do so. But this did not influence me. For, in the first place, I could not believe that they were made for so wrongful—for so anti-democratic a purpose: and, in the second place, even had I thus believed, I, nevertheless, could not have consented to use them for that purpose. There is no rule—nay, there is no enactment, however solemn or commanding, that I can consent to wield against the all-vital and sacred majority principle; or, in other words, against democracy itself.

“When I complained, that the plan in question was revolution, I was charged with inconsistency—inconsistency with my well-known readiness to rescue a fugitive slave. It was true, that I would rescue a fugitive slave. Nevertheless, I felt not the pertinence of the charge of inconsistency. In rescuing him, I take my stand outside of the Government, and am a confessed revolutionist. Let it be remembered, that it is only, whilst and where, I am inside of the Government, that I acknowledge myself bound to bow to the will of the majority. I bow to it in the legislative hall and in the court-room; and every where and always do I bow to it; until the purposed *execution* of the decree that is intolerable. Then I rebel. They are guilty of anticipating the only proper time for rebellion, who resort to it during the process of legislation. I sit in the House of Representatives, and hear my fellow-members discuss, and see them vote upon, a bill, which wrongs me greatly. Argument and persuasion and my vote are all, that I can, legitimately, oppose to its passage. If it pass, and its enforcement be contemplated, it will be, then, for me to decide whether to rebel against the Government, and to resist the enforcement.

“I need say no more, in explanation or defence of my grounds for refusing to go into the scheme to prevent the majority from bringing the House to a vote on the Nebraska bill. I will, however, before leaving the subject, advert to the fact, that for refusing to go into this scheme—into this physical struggle, which continued through thirty-five successive hours—into this strife, to see which party could go the longer without sleeping, and eating, and, I would that I could add, without *drinking*

also—my reputation for fidelity to the anti-slavery cause has suffered not a little in some quarters. Moreover, it is not only in this wise, that I suffered loss by refusing to follow the multitude on that occasion. My reputation for a sound understanding, poor as it was before—and poor as that of every radical and earnest abolitionist must continue to be, until abolition shall be in the ascendant—is far poorer now. It is, I suppose, for my singularity on that memorable occasion, that a very distinguished and much esteemed editor tells the world that I am ‘deficient in common sense.’ I am happy to believe, however, that this editor will readily admit, that it is far better to be ‘deficient in common sense’ than in common honesty : and that, when he shall have read this letter, he will clearly see, that, with my views of the comprehensive and sacred claims of the majority principle, I could not have gone into the combination in question, and yet have retained common honesty. I was a fool in this editor’s esteem not to go into it. But he will, now, perceive, that I would have been a rogue, had I gone into it. He will, now, be glad that I did not go into it. For much as he values knowledge, he values integrity more. And were he, now, to meet me, he would press my hand, and thank me, that I played the fool in preference to playing the rogue.

“By the way, will not this editor allow me to remind him, that when little more than three short years ago, I went into different parts of our State to speak against certain Senators for their daring to prevent the necessary majority of the Senate from passing the Canal bill, he had no censures, but rather praises, to bestow on me? It is true, that he and I both desired the success of the Canal bill ; and that we both desired the defeat of the Nebraska bill. And it is true, therefore, that, whilst my principles worked for his and my interests and wishes in the former case, they worked, (at least as some thought,) against them in the latter. Was this, however, a good reason why I should not allow them to work in the latter, as well as in the former case? I ask this editor—I ask the world—how it was possible for me to fall in with this policy of preventing the vote on the Nebraska bill, unless I was also prepared to revoke my condemnation of the like policy on the part of the Senators to whom I have referred.”

Now, I do not say, that this argument, which I have here copied, was sound. I leave it for *you* to say it : and you will say it, on the very first occasion you shall have for saying it. It is not improbable, that, within a few years, the opponents of slavery will be in the majority in both Houses of Congress. Then they will undertake to repeal so much of the Nebraska bill, as repeals the compromise line ; and they will, also, undertake to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia. But the advocates of slavery, pleading for their precedent the revolutionary movement for preventing the vote on the Nebraska bill, will resort to a similar movement. The *Tribune* will, of course, denounce the factious, rebellious, anarchical conduct—and, in denouncing it, will fulfill my prediction, and virtually endorse my argument. In vain, however, will it be for the *Tribune* to denounce that in its foes, which it justified in its friends. Then, too, many a one who was in Con-



gress with me and who, in his zeal against the Nebraska bill, forgot what was due to the great democratic majority principle and to the dignity of a legislature, will clamor against others for doing the very thing which they had themselves done—for playing a game which one has as good right as another to play. These gentlemen will, however, avail nothing by their clamor but to be laughed at for their impudent inconsistency. In that day, mine will be the only rebuking and healthful example—unless, indeed, as I, this moment, think was the fact, there were two or three democratic members, who, though voting against the bill, did not go into the combination to prevent the taking of the vote upon it.

But what as to the foundation for all the fun—and some of it very ill-natured, not to say malignant fun—which you and others have made of my going to bed at nine o'clock? It is true that it is my habit to go to bed at that early hour, and it is also true, that I do not admit, that I am at all the worse for the habit, physically, intellectually, or morally. But when or where have I plead this habit, as an excuse for any part of my conduct on the Nebraska bill? Never—no where. It is true, that I have occasionally said, that the physical struggle, which the members went into, could, no more than does a duel, decide which party is with the right. It is true, that I have occasionally said, that if questions in Congress are to be decided by such a struggle, men of the physical qualities and habits for such a struggle, however weak or wicked they may be, are the proper men to send to Congress. It is true, that I have occasionally said, that such being the mode for disposing of questions in Congress, I, who get sleepy at nine o'clock, and who have conscience against keeping myself awake by drinking a glass of rum every hour, am the last man to send to Congress. It is true, too, that I said much against night-sessions of Congress; and that I sat very uneasy in the midst of the gross drunkenness, which abounded in the Hall, the night of the voting on the Nebraska bill. But I put it to your discrimination and conscience, whether, in saying all this, I said, that I valued my sleep more than I did the cause of freedom, and, that, sooner than not be in bed at nine o'clock, I would fail to record my vote against the Nebraska bill. Is it not a very glaring perversion of my words, of which you have been guilty?

I am amazed, that you can find it in your heart to persevere in these utterly groundless and wicked misrepresentations of me. You are not a stranger to my services for the slave; and you know how base and absurd is the charge, that I, who, for his sake, have, in every hour of the night, faced the howling tempest, and have, also, for his sake, repeatedly faced the howling mob, should, at last, be found making more account of a few hours sleep than of my solemn duties to the cause of liberty. And yet, you continue to tell the world not only that I am guilty of this entirely incomprehensible and exceedingly criminal inconsistency, but that I confess, that I am. Whatever may be your opinion of my argument for declining to be a party to the device for staving off the vote on the Nebraska bill, I am sure that you believe in your heart, that there was no man, either in or out of Congress, who would have made greater sacrifices than I to defeat the bill.

Since I see you are determined to keep afloat the slander that I was not willing, ay, that I did myself declare that I was not willing, to sit up after nine o'clock, even for the high duty of standing sentinel for freedom, I do not a little wonder, that you should admit that I voted on the passage of the Nebraska bill. For, in order to vote on it, I had to be in the Capitol, until between eleven and twelve o'clock at night—perhaps quite twelve. Yes, to be certain of not failing to vote on it, I had to be in my seat not only all day, but until about the hour of midnight.

I said, that I was amazed at your continuing to wrong me. I admit, that you are tempted to it: and I am willing, in making up my estimate of your guilt, to make all just allowance for the force of the temptation. I know, that you are tempted to hope, that, by showing my type of anti-slavery to be unreliable and worthless, you will succeed in destroying public confidence in the whole class of technical and radical abolitionists, and in winning favor for your own sort of anti-slavery—that half-and-half, now here and now there sort, which will, one month, study its interests by swelling out into big words against slaveholders, and which will study them, the next month, in being as busy as a bee to seduce the dupes of those big words to vote for Henry Clay, or some other slaveholder. In the light of what I have here said, your abuse of me, whilst I was in Congress, and your abuse of me ever since, is no mystery. And yet, after mitigating your offence by every proper allowance for your temptation to the offence, I am constrained to say, that, had there been magnanimity, though ever so little, among the elements of your character, it would have sufficed to overcome the temptation to fall upon a man like myself—yes, even a much stronger temptation than that to which you have yielded. For I am a man, who has no hold on the public favor; and who is, always and every where, spoken against, ridiculed, reviled. I have no party, no press, no means for defending myself. The meanest Whig, or Democrat, or Sectarian, from the fact, that he has a party and a press to help him, can succeed in starting any, even the most extravagant, lie respecting me. Ay, the very abolitionists will believe it:—for the poor credulous, simple souls have not yet faith enough in each other to shut their ears to lies about each other. The *New-York Tribune*, with its imposing pretensions to candor, can gull them to any extent it pleases. To gain an unjust victory over an isolated, helpless man like myself is indeed very easy, very temptingly easy:—but is it not as ungenerous and mean, as it is easy?

I notice with what contempt you speak in your yesterday's editorial of my brief Congressional life. All I have to reply is, that I did what I could, whilst in Congress, by my lips and my life, to serve the interests of freedom, and temperance, and peace, and humanity, and religion; and that for having done so, I should, however small my intellect or influence, have been respected, and not despised, by you—commended, and not calumniated.

I would send this manuscript to you, were it not, that you have, within the last week, refused to print some twenty or thirty lines, which I sent you, in reply to an attack upon me in your columns.



Since you refused to print those few lines, you would, of course, refuse to print these many lines. Should you, however, consent to re-print this letter, I will cheerfully pay your charge for doing so:—and none the less cheerfully, because of any ill-natured comments, with which you may see fit to accompany it. No comments in the case can change the facts in the case. The facts, unchanged and unchangeable, will live, to break through and scatter all the clouds, which you have succeeded in collecting upon my reputation, and to work out, in the end, my perfect and triumphant vindication. They will live too, to stamp broader and broader, deeper and deeper, disgrace upon you, until you shall have completed the retractions, which you have, at last, found yourself compelled to begin, and until you shall have confessed your sorrow and shame for having yielded to the temptation to slander one, who, not only has no advantages for defending himself, but who has shown himself to be both patient under wrongs, and unwilling to inflict them.

GERRIT SMITH.

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### THE TRIBUNE'S REPLY, JULY 28.

WE have no delight in controversy with a gentleman like Mr. Gerrit Smith, whom, in spite of his eccentricities, it is impossible not to respect, and whose fiercest blows one can only desire to parry with tenderness, and to pay back with mercy. A generous, independent man, whose impulses are mainly on the right side, though his action may sometimes be on the wrong, it is much more to our taste to do justice to his often admirable and humane public conduct than to perform the part of censor upon his occasional public errors and weaknesses. Indeed our readers will bear us witness that we have never commented upon the latter except in a most forbearing manner; and if we are now forced to do otherwise, it is the fault of nobody but Mr. Smith himself.

Not very long ago, a correspondent of the *Tribune*, at Syracuse, spoke of Mr. Smith as having failed to vote against the Nebraska Bill because it was his rule to go to bed at nine o'clock. This statement having been brought to our notice by a friend of Mr. Smith, we at once corrected it, and again repeated the notorious fact—often before prominently published in these columns, and never contradicted there until this Syracuse letter—that Mr. Smith was present at the final division on the Nebraska Bill, and voted against it. But at the same time we added that when the prolonged struggle of the Northern members was going forward to prevent the bill from being brought to a vote, Mr. Smith was absent, on the ground of unwillingness to sit up after nine at night; and it is this statement which now provokes his anger and creates the extraordinary display which elsewhere adorns our page. We trust the reader will peruse his letter; and indulge us, before we proceed to notice it, in the declaration that we are

not in the slightest degree influenced to give it place by the delicate proffer to pay for its insertion, with which Mr. Smith favors us in his peroration. Any advertisements that he may desire to publish will be very willingly received at the usual rates in the proper part of the paper; but admission to these columns is not to be commanded on such terms, either for letters, speeches, or any other description of puff.

By way of justifying himself, and disproving that his hour of going to bed had any thing to do with his absence from the Nebraska struggle, Mr. Smith quotes a long passage from an address to his constituents, published on his return from Washington, and duly copied in the *Tribune* at the time. In this extract his absence is put exclusively on the ground of principle. The course of the minority in resisting the bill seemed to him wrong, and he refused to join in it. This was all right; had he urged no other ground we might have thought him mistaken, but must have respected his fidelity to his conviction. But this was not all. In a part of the very same address, which, in the present objurgatory letter, he takes care to omit, he used the following words in reference to a letter of his which had been published :

*"In leaving the Nebraska Bill, I will briefly refer to the censures which have been cast on one of my private letters. The whole or none of that letter should have been printed. I was sorry to see disjointed parts of it in print. The letter is not before me; but I remember that I spoke in it against night sessions of Congress, and declared that had the hour of three in the morning been appointed for taking the vote on the Nebraska Bill, I should not have been present."*

The passage of the private letter above referred to was as follows :

*"Suppose our House had appointed three o'clock in the morning as the hour for taking the final vote on the Nebraska Bill. I should not in that case have given my vote, for I should have felt it to be my duty to be in bed at that hour. On whom would rest the responsibility of my absence and my missing vote? Some of my friends would say upon myself; but I would say on the House."*

Now, we submit that, in view of these declarations, it is rather difficult to understand the warmth of excitement with which Mr. Smith now repels the idea that he was absent from that memorable struggle because he wanted to be in bed. He here admits that while on principle he was opposed to joining in the battle waged in the House, he was also opposed to it because it interfered with his bed-time, and not only so, but that he would also have been absent even from the final vote on the bill for the same reason. He would have done this had the opportunity occurred; it was in his heart, but accidentally not in his act, to fail to vote against the bill. And as for his failing to take part in the great parliamentary contest which preceded the passage of the bill, while objections of principle formed one reason, objections of sleepiness formed another; and because we mention one in correcting the mis-statement of a correspondent, without mentioning the whole, we are assailed by Mr. Smith in a style of rhetoric which we do not care to characterize.

Mr. Smith will perhaps pardon the suggestion that, when reading us so violent a lecture, he would have done well to be careful as to the correctness of his own statements, many of which very broadly sin against the truth. For instance, he charges that we have till now concealed the fact that he voted against the Nebraska Bill, when the truth is that it was published most prominently at the time, and that, so far as we are aware, nothing has ever been said or insinuated to the contrary in our columns until this unlucky letter from Syracuse. And of all the explanations on this subject that Mr. Smith has ever given to the world, we do not recollect one that we have not freely copied. He says, that we have continued to wrong him in this matter; indeed, he seems to imagine with an exaggeration which, if it did not proceed from excessive passion, would be melancholy evidence of monomania, that the *Tribune* makes it a business to do him injury, and that maligning his Congressional career is one of our standard employments. The truth is, that we have never spoken of him but with a sense of kindness, and a desire to be perfectly just. Indeed, we think nothing so unfavorable to his reputation as his own letter of this morning, could ever have been admitted to our columns, except under peculiar circumstances and with his signature. And, finally, we assure him that we forgive both the virulent vituperation with which he assails us, and the Pharisaic complacency with which he lauds himself, and that we sincerely hope he may live long for the world's improvement and his own.

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## MR. SMITH'S SECOND LETTER.

PETERBORO, *July 31, 1855.*

*To the New-York Tribune :*

I HAVE but just returned home, after a week's tour in behalf of our Maine Law—that excellent law, which you are defending so ably and so influentially. This accounts for a day's delay in thanking you for publishing my long letter to you. It was mainly in you to publish it, and it will be mainly in you to publish this also.

The editorial, with which you have seen fit to accompany my letter, does, I confess, both surprise and grieve me. It has made bad worse. You have but multiplied your wrongs against me, instead of blotting out, by the repentance I had hoped for, both the effect and the sin of those wrongs which you had previously inflicted on me.

Let us first, however, to your allegation, that I have wronged you. You hold, that I “broadly sin against the truth,” in charging you with being the chief and most responsible propagator of the calumny, that I did not vote on the Nebraska Bill. So far are you from confessing the truth of this charge, as virtually to claim, that your columns have vindicated me from the calumny. This claim can not

fail to astonish your readers; for they have all believed—and believed it too because they were your readers—that I did not vote on the Nebraska Bill. Moreover, they have all believed, that why I did not vote on it was because, in my low self-indulgence, I preferred sleep to duty. I will not deny, that you “published most prominently at the time” my vote on the bill, provided your copying the record of the whole affirmative and negative vote deserves to be so characterized. But whence comes it, that, in spite of your doing so, your readers, including even the abolitionists—the for ever silly, because for ever Whig-cheated abolitionists—have all along believed that I did not vote on the bill? Of course, it comes from the fact, and most naturally too, that you have spoken, so expressly and strongly, against my anti-slavery integrity, and that you have, also, repeatedly spoken in ways which, to say the least, imply that I did not vote on it. All this necessarily had the effect, both to prevent and to erase, so far as my name was concerned, any impression which your record of the vote was calculated to make. For all this, when it did not have the effect to lead your readers to assume that my name was not in the record, did have the effect to wear out their recollections of having seen it there. Doubtless the *New-York Herald* did, also, publish the vote on the Nebraska Bill. But, inasmuch as that paper represented me as having gone over to slavery, and as being engaged in purchasing a Southern plantation and in stocking it with slaves, they, who believe what they find in its columns, were not very likely either to receive or to retain the impression, that I, a fresh convert to slavery, voted against the Nebraska Bill. Now, your readers believe you perhaps even more than the readers of the *Herald* believe it. Hence, when they were reading in your columns—aye, in your very editorials—at the time of the agitation in Congress on the Nebraska Bill, that I was giving signs of utter apostacy from the cause of the slave, and that the slaveholders, having covered me all over with the slime of their flattery, were about swallowing me entire, it is not at all strange, that the mere fact of my name’s being in the record of the vote on the bill should have little or no influence upon them.

But I have not done with defending myself against your charge, that I have wronged you, in holding you up as my principal calumniator in the case in hand. About the first day of the present month, the base charge, with unusually base accompaniments, that I was not present at the taking of the vote on the Nebraska Bill, appeared in your columns. On the 16th instant you retracted the charge. But you know that, to this day, you would not have done so, had you not been compelled to it by my prompt denial of the charge. That denial you refused to publish; and even the miserable thing which you gave to your readers in its stead was not published until you had given the slander a full fortnight, in which to send its poison through the public veins.

So much for your charge of my having wronged you. I have shown how entirely baseless it is. It will never be renewed by you, unless,



indeed, you shall come to surpass even yourself in draughts upon the popular credulity. And now to your fresh wrongs against myself.

1st. You seek to cover over your gross injustice to me by declarations of your uniform "kindness" and "tenderness" to my "errors" and "weaknesses." That I am an erring and weak man, and that, as such, I greatly need "kindness" and "tenderness" at the hands of my fellow-men, is cheerfully admitted by me. Nevertheless, there is one thing, which I need even more than "kindness" and "tenderness." It is justice. Justice I must have. I can accept no substitute for it. If you will give me that, I will be content, even though you shall not add the grace of "kindness" and "tenderness." But pray what do you mean by your professions of "kindness" and "tenderness" toward me? If but irony, or a mere joke, I make no complaint. But, if you intended to have them taken literally, and as sincere, then they are the most impudently false professions which I have ever known.

2d. You cheapen my letter to you by representing it to be the fruit of an uncontrollable temper. I admit, that the words of an angry man are entitled to all the less consideration for his being an angry man. I think, however, I can safely say, that if I have ever disgraced my manhood by exhibitions of anger, not my neighbors, nor even my family, know it.

3d. You couple with my name eccentricities and "monomania"; and I confess, that I am sorry you do. Desiring deeply that my efforts in aid of the great and good objects which I cherish may tell as far as possible, I am always pained when I see them crippled by encountering the public suspicion, that I am an eccentric and insane man. I had begun to hope, that, as Temperance and Freedom were getting so well advanced among us, I should soon be entirely exempt from this suspicion. I speak of Temperance and Freedom—since it was not until I became a Temperance man, that any one did so much as hint that I am eccentric, and since it was not until I became an abolitionist, that I was ever called a madman. I was well aware, that I might have saved my reputation for common sense and sanity, had I consented to be a more moderate, or somewhat qualified, Temperance man and abolitionist. But it still seems to me, (perhaps, however, only because I am still eccentric and insane,) that I should, in that case, have been a less consistent, and as time would prove, a less useful friend of Temperance and Freedom.

There are many facts in my Temperance and Abolition history, that have favored the charge of my being eccentric and mad. The fact, that, although it is nearly thirty years since I espoused the cause of Temperance, I have never, since I espoused it, allowed myself to vote for any man for the office of Supervisor, or Justice of the Peace, until I had first ascertained, that he would refuse to license the sale of intoxicating drinks, has favored this charge. The fact too, that, for more than twenty years, and even as far back as when my immediate emancipation (I was always an immediate emancipationist) was clogged by my colonization, I came under the conviction—a conviction immediately translated into practice—that, among the supplies of my

family, there ought to be none—no cloth, no rice, no sugar, no cotton—that are wet with the tears and sweat and blood of the poor toiling and unpaid slave—that fact, too, gave countenance to the charge of my being an eccentric and crazy man. I believe, however, that the day will come when such facts will be regarded as perfectly consistent with a *rational* opposition to drunkenness and slavery. Another fact which favored this charge is, that, at a very early day, I became persuaded, that not only no slaveholder, however intellectual or amiable he may be, is capable of representing my views of civil government, but that no non-slaveholder is, whose views of civil government can be represented by a slaveholder. Out of this persuasion grew my motto: “Vote for no slaveholder, and for no one who does vote for a slaveholder”—a motto, which, as it proscribes all Whigs and Democrats, brings me under the disfavor of all Whigs and Democrats. This motto I have never failed to honor at the ballot-box. Hundreds of thousands of voters will, I believe, honor it, ere long. I wish you might be among them, instead of neutralizing your testimony against slavery by admitting, every now and then, that you would vote for a slaveholder. Possibly, the clearer light, which shall reveal to you the reasonableness of the motto, will also reveal to you the reasonableness of many other things in my life, which have passed with you for eccentricity and madness. Pardon me, if these lines shall, like some in my former letter, savor, in your esteem, of self-laudation. I loathe self-laudation; but my loathing of it shall not deter me from self-defence.

4th. The way is now prepared for me to take up the principal one of the fresh wrongs you have done me. I call it the principal one, because it is an imputation upon my ingenuousness and veracity. I addressed a letter to my constituents. It was both written and published in Washington, and not, as you represent, at my home. In one part of the letter I present my reason for refusing to join with the minority to prevent the taking of the vote on the Nebraska Bill. This reason was, that the minority has no right to baffle and control the majority. In my letter to you I set this forth as my only reason. You say, that I had another reason also; and you add, that I avowed it in my letter to my constituents. This other reason for not joining the majority is, as you declare, that to join it would interfere with my bed-time. And now to the trial of this issue. Hear first, my argument, that I had but the one reason, which I stated in my letter to you; and then we will hear yours, that, in my letter to my constituents, I confessed, that I had one more.

1st. My antecedents—especially what I spoke and wrote on the subject of our Senators’ refusing to vote on the Canal Bill, and on their withdrawing from the Senate Chamber—prove, that I had but to be consistent with my own theory of civil government, in order to refuse to go into the combination for staving off the vote on the Nebraska Bill. These antecedents also prove, that my earnestness in behalf of this theory at this point, needed no additional considerations to induce me to carry it out.

2d. *There* are the Members of Congress, who urged me to go into



the combination. Ask Senators Chase and Sumner, or any other of them whether they ever heard me give a reason for not going into the combination other than that which I gave in my letter to you. *There* too are the gentlemen out of Congress, who argued the case with me. Ask Preston King, or any of them, whether they heard me give any other reason. They will all reply, that I gave no other.

3d. Look at the recorded proceedings of Congress. They show, that I was opposed on principle to the combination in question; for they show, that I voted against the devices to consume time, and prevent the taking of the vote on the bill. There is the record of my votes on the side of the pro-slavery majority. Yes, this record shows that I sat and voted with that guilty majority. Publish, if you please, in the most strongly condemnatory terms, that I was found, in that memorable struggle, in pro-slavery company—in the company of men who were guilty of one of the most stupendous and atrocious swindlings ever known. Hold me up, if you please, to everlasting detestation for all that; for all that is true. Only do not persist in telling of me what is not true.

4th. There is my letter to my constituents. It speaks for itself. It gives but one reason for my refusing to join the minority in trampling on the rights of the majority. In using such language I mean no reproach on the minority. They acted out their conscience, and I mine. They thought that they were upholding rights, whilst I thought that they were trampling on rights.

We come, now, to your argument for showing that I avowed, in my letter to my constituents, two reasons for not combining with the minority on the occasion referred to. That I may be certain of doing you no injustice, I will copy the whole of your argument on this point.

“By way of justifying himself and disproving that his hour of going to bed had any thing to do with his absence from the Nebraska struggle, Mr. Smith quotes a long passage from an address to his constituents published on his return from Washington, and duly copied in the *Tribune* at the time. In this extract his absence is put exclusively on the ground of principle. The course of the minority in resisting the bill seemed to him wrong, and he refused to join in it. This was all right; had he urged no other ground we might have thought him mistaken, but must have respected his fidelity to his conviction. But this was not all. In a part of the very same address, which in the present objurgatory letter of his he takes care to omit, he used the following words in reference to a letter which had been published:

“*In leaving the Nebraska Bill, I will briefly refer to the censures which have been cast on one of my private letters. The whole or none of that letter should have been printed. I was sorry to see disjointed parts of it in print. The letter is not before me; but I remember, that I spoke in it against night sessions of Congress, and declared that had the hour of three in the morning been appointed for taking the vote on the Nebraska Bill, I should not have been present.*”

"The passage of the private letter above referred to was as follows :

*"Suppose our House had appointed three o'clock in the morning as the hour for taking the final vote on the Nebraska Bill. I should not in that case have given my vote; for I should have felt it to be my duty to be in bed at that hour. On whom would rest the responsibility of my absence and my missing vote? Some of my friends would say upon myself; but I would say, on the House."*

"Now, we submit that, in view of these declarations, it is rather difficult to understand the warmth of excitement with which Mr. Smith now repels the idea that he was absent from that memorable struggle because he wanted to be in bed. He here admits that while on principle he was opposed to joining in the battle waged in the House, he was also opposed to it because it interfered with his bed-time."

Now, I submit, whether, in your zeal to convict me of insincerity, you have not entirely confounded one subject with another. Neither the passage you extract from the private letter, nor that you extract from the letter to my constituents, says one word about the "memorable struggle," in which the majority tried to bring the House to a vote on the Nebraska Bill, and the minority tried to stave off the vote. Both of these passages refer to *the taking of the vote* on the Nebraska Bill.

You see your blunder. Men, as able and logical as you are, have been guilty of blunders. Some of them have been magnanimous enough to confess them, and some have not. With which of the two classes you shall identify yourself remains to be proved. You ventured to impeach my veracity. I have triumphantly vindicated it. You would perhaps consult your popularity by refusing to publish, or to admit the vindication. But I hope, that you will prefer to honor yourself and to honor human nature, even though it shall be at the expense of your popularity.

But, although the extracts, which you made, do entirely fail to convict me of any degree of insincerity or falsehood, for the reason that they do not apply to the subject, which, in your haste, you took it for granted, that they did apply to, there is, nevertheless, another direction also, in which you use the extracts against me. You use them to prove, that, in a certain event, I would, by my own admission, have failed to vote on the Nebraska bill. I admit, that they prove it. What, however, has this to do with your former charges against me? These charges regarded what I actually did in actual circumstances. But, now, you arraign me for conjecturing (it could be conjecturing only) what I should do in certain supposable circumstances. You are ungenerous. Since I did vote in the actual case, you should be ready to forgive my after suppositions, however foolish, that, in an imagined contingency, well-nigh impossible to occur, I should refuse to vote. I do not recollect how I came to suppose this three o'clock case. It probably was to illustrate the absurdity of entering upon a physical struggle, which was to keep members of Congress from their tables and beds for weeks, ay for months—for, when it was entered upon, it was a common boast, that it should be protracted for at least six months, if not indeed until the expiration of that Congress in March, 1855.

It occurs to me from your language, that you would have it under-

stood, that had the vote on the Nebraska bill not been taken until after three o'clock, I would have left the House before the taking of it. My letter to my constituents shows, that I meant no such thing. I had in my mind the outrage and wickedness of appointing, the day beforehand, or days beforehand, a session at an hour so unseasonable, that some would be too feeble, and none would be fit, to attend it. You intimate, that, with a dishonest intent, I forebore to quote from my letter to my constituents what it must now be abundantly evident to you there was no occasion whatever to quote. I, in my turn, do now charge you with omitting to quote from it that, which would have explained to my advantage and vindication what I meant in the part, you did quote. I will, however, supply your omission, and quote what is necessary to serve the cause of truth, at this point.

"I might dwell on many objections to giving my countenance to this three o'clock appointment. I will detain you with only a few of them; and with but a glance at these. 1st. Some members of Congress are, either from age or other causes, too feeble to be compelled, unless in a case of absolute necessity, to leave their beds, at such an unusual hour for leaving them. 2d. At this sleepy hour, few persons are in a state for the wise and safe transaction of important business. 3d. As the friend of temperance, both my lips and example shall ever testify against any night-session of Congress, that is not called for by the clearest necessity. What if the majority had appointed the taking of the vote on the Nebraska question, in a dram-shop? Would you have had me present? I trust not.

"But, I shall, perhaps, be told, that were it, once, understood, that the friends of temperance, and decency, and good hours, refuse to appear in Congress, the latter part of the night; advantage would be taken of the refusal, and that part of the night would be chosen for mischievous and wicked legislation. This supposes two things, however, neither of which, I trust, is supposable. It supposes, 1st, that a majority of the members of Congress would be guilty of such an outrage; and, 2d, that the people would be patient under it. Had the Nebraska bill been passed by calling us from our beds at three o'clock, the people would have seen, in this disgraceful fact, another and a strong reason for condemning this bill and its supporters."

I trust, that your readers will not construe my words to mean, that I would not have gone into a three-o'clock-in-the-morning session, for the sake of *defeating* the Nebraska Bill. I suppose that, for that purpose, I would have gone to a session at any hour. I voted on it not to defeat it—for it was made manifest some days before that it would pass by a decided majority. I voted on it for the purpose of recording my name against a perfidious and high-handed assault on the cause of freedom. The voting on the bill "simply recorded," as you rightly say, in your editorial of the 16th instant, "a foregone conclusion." Let me add in this connection, that no man was more determined than myself not to fail to cast his vote on the bill; and that no man was more careful than myself not to miss the opportunity to



do so. It is true, that, during the memorable struggle, I did not remain in the House, as many members did, for the purpose of preventing the taking of the vote on the Nebraska Bill; but it is also true, that I did remain there, and with as few intermissions as they, watching for the time when the bill should be put to vote—a time which might come in any hour of the day or night.

Just here I would say something of this “private letter,” from which you have quoted. It was fair in you to quote from it what you did; for I had myself indorsed this much of it in a public letter—in my letter to my constituents. But there are newspapers—especially those little cur newspapers, so proud in their habit of biting at my heels—that quote other parts of it also, for the purpose of damaging me. These newspapers quote from it to prove, that my reason for refusing to go into the struggle to prevent the taking of the vote on the Nebraska Bill was, that I would not consent to change my bedtime. Now, in the extracts from it which I have seen, there is but one sentence, and that a short one, which speaks of this struggle. Moreover, that sentence was followed by \* \* \*. The whole of the sentence is: “I declined entering into the physical strife—into the question which party could do the longest without eating or drinking.” But even if there were any thing in these extracts, which might seem to make against my declaration—that I assigned but the one reason, which I declare I assigned, for not going into the combination to stave off the vote—I should still deny the right to quote the extracts against such declaration. 1st. Because, as there are abundant unequivocal proofs to show what was my reason for refusing to enter the combination, it would be illogical, unphilosophical, absurd to turn away from these to such, as are exceedingly scanty and uncertain. I am known to hold to the anti-slavery construction of the Federal Constitution. How unreasonable it would be to quote, in the face of the decisive proofs to this end, the few lines in one of my private letters that might seem to look in an opposite direction! 2d. The extracts should not be used against me, because they are extracts from a private letter—a private letter, too, that was evidently written in haste, and in a playful spirit. 3d. Extracts from a letter do not prove even its general, much less its precise, tenor and drift. How far these disjointed extracts would be modified by the unprinted parts of the letter, I do not know; for I took no copy of it. 4th. It is important, in order to interpret this letter safely, to know what were the questions put in the letter, to which it was an answer. (I remember them but very generally and very uncertainly.)

But I need say no more of the private letter in question. Indeed, so far as our controversy is concerned, I did not need to say any thing of it; for you were at full liberty to quote from it what you did: your only error, at this point, consisting in your assumption, that the quotation referred to one subject, when, on the very face of it, it refers entirely to another.

My argument is ended. You find fault with my rhetoric. I find fault with your facts. I am a plain man, and I care and know comparatively little about rhetoric. But I love honesty; and, therefore, do

I make great account of facts. It is, because you wronged me in your facts that I had to take up my pen. If it is in my rhetoric only, that I have wronged you, then is the balance largely against you.

I need not tell you, that you are worsted in our controversy. You have too much sense not to know it, and too much pride not to feel it. But you have no right to complain of the result. Your readers will bear me witness that I went into the controversy very reluctantly. You had to keep pushing me for nearly a year and a half, before you finally succeeded in pushing me into it.

"Beware

Of entrance to a quarrel; but being in

Bear it, that the opposer may beware of thee."

We both know, equally well, that I obeyed the former of these two injunctions of the great poet. Whether I have obeyed the latter also, you know better than I.

The "errors," "weaknesses," "eccentricities," "excessive passions" or "monomania," which you attribute to me, have, doubtless, had not a little to do in encouraging you to select me as the person, on whom to vent your ill-humors, and practice your weapons of ridicule and detraction. From the return blows of one so crazy, so foolish, so impotent as you had pictured me to be, you, of course, felt that there was nothing to fear. Sorry, however, as is the plight, in which this controversy leaves you, it, nevertheless, is not without its important instructions to you; and so far, therefore, you may console yourself, that the controversy is not all loss to you. Ever hereafter, you will know, ay keenly feel, how exceedingly unsafe it is to judge, in the light of the disparaging and bad names, which you have yourself put upon your opponent, of the measure of his ability to defend himself against your assaults. Ever hereafter, you will be entirely convinced, that a man is not necessarily the poor thing, which it has suited your fancy and your interest to represent him to be. Now, such instruction would be worth something to any body. It is especially valuable to you, who seem to have been so remarkably destitute of it.

I observe, that you say nothing of my proposition to have you print the Speech, which I made in Congress on the Nebraska bill. I am very desirous that you should show your readers what words I was dropping into the ears of slaveholders, at the very time when you were making those readers believe in my suppleness to slaveholders, and in my base desertion of the anti-slavery cause. My offer of \$300 for your compensation was perhaps not enough. Hence, I extend it to \$500. Your rule to receive pay for advertisements only shall not be in the way of your publishing the speech;—for you may class it with advertisements, and yet have the \$500. Any way you please: only get it before the readers of your columns.

I observe, too, that you make no argument to show, that I am wrong in denying to the minority the right to control the majority. I add, that you never will, ay never can, make an argument to that end. The passion and prejudice of the moment may drive the minority into an attitude so unwarranted and false. But as long as democracy itself

shall remain truth—and that will be ever—so long will the right of the majority to vote down the minority remain a truth.

I close with thanking you for your wish, that I may live long to improve myself. Be assured, that I reciprocate the kind and generous wish—and that I do so all the more cordially, because you are in such especial need of improvement.

GERRIT SMITH.

## THE TRIBUNE'S REPLY, AUGUST 17.

MR. GERRIT SMITH has done us the honor to address a second letter to the *Tribune*, to which, notwithstanding its enormous length, we in turn do the honor of a place in our columns. We are happy to say that it is an improvement on his former effort. Where that was furious, this is mild; where that distinctly and violently alleged what was not the fact, this performs that ungrateful office with striking vagueness and moderation. At this rate, if Mr. Smith should have occasion to favor us with a third communication, we shall expect it to be an exemplar of epistolary suavity, worthy of a first place in any new Model Letter Writer, which our enterprising publishers may bring out for the use of juvenile and unsophisticated minds.

But, while we award such praise to the ameliorated style and sweetened tone of our correspondent, we must be pardoned for saying that we would gladly have been spared such an evidence of moral improvement. There are controversies, perhaps, in which we do not regret to see our adversary display an eclatant weakness, laying himself open to merciless thrusts and cuts in return. But with the present champion there is no pleasure in such a triumph. We respect too deeply the goodness of his heart to look on without pain when he demonstrates, with wilful needlessness, the want of brains in his head. For this reason, we should greatly prefer to have been spared the publication of the feeble and indiscreet lucubration for which we to-day make room. Letter-writing is a dangerous practice; it has killed off many a public man; and, while Mr. Smith has better holds on life than his political achievements can offer, and is safe even against the blows of his own pen, there are other spheres of labor in which he can at once render good service to the public, and do credit to his own reputation; in this, he seems rather to waste his time and talents to no purpose whatever.

Mr. Smith, with a reckless and passionate haste which we rebuked but too mildly, charged us in his former letter with being "the chief and most responsible propagator of the calumny that he did not vote on the Nebraska bill." We denied that this charge possessed any foundation whatever; and in turn declared that Mr. Smith had broadly sinned against the truth in making it. Such was the issue between us; and in meeting it, a man of common sense, as well as of a desire to be



fair and honest (nobody disputes that Mr. Smith means to be the latter), would have resorted to a file of the *Tribune*, and would have either quoted from it the proof that we had propagated the calumny in question, or he would have owned, like a man, that he was wrong in thus accusing us. But Mr. Smith does neither. He neither establishes his own case nor confesses ours; but, without a particle of evidence, repeats his allegation, putting it on the imaginary ground that our readers have all believed him guilty of shirking the vote on the Nebraska bill, because he wanted to go to bed. Now, how does Mr. Smith know what is believed by all the million of people who read the *Tribune*? Or, if he has some supernatural means of knowing that they entertain such an opinion about him, what right has he to hold us responsible for it? What we have said or implied of him is not hidden or doubtful; there is no occasion for guesses or insinuations about it; and Mr. Smith ought to be ashamed of himself for repeating, on such silly grounds, accusations which we positively deny, and for the truth of which no proof can be brought. Nay, more: he goes further, and charges us with having "spoken expressly and strongly against his anti-slavery integrity." False, Mr. Smith, every word of it! We never uttered or implied a doubt of your integrity, unless you regard the statement, forced from us most unwillingly, that you are deficient in common sense, and too abundant in vanity and self-esteem, as expressing such a doubt. And as for the constant ill-humor, ridicule and detraction you gratuitously attribute to us, we beg to say that it is no such thing. You labor under a curious delusion on this point. We have no desire to injure you, and never had, but the contrary; indeed, we have never lost an occasion of doing justice to your many good qualities and laudable public acts; and if we have sometimes—at very rare intervals—been constrained to speak of you in other terms than those of praise, it has always been with regret. Does Mr. Smith suppose all the world is bound to glorify him at every turn? For our part we answer that for most of the time we have better business on hand; indeed, he mightily exaggerates his importance when he supposes that the *Tribune* bears him constantly in mind, whether for admiration or contempt. He is a well meaning man, accidentally very rich, and able to do good with his money; but we must confess that, for at least as much as eleven months out of every year, we are so absorbed by other matters of interest in the world, as totally to forget his existence.

But though Mr. Smith has not referred to a file of the *Tribune* to prove that we have steadily calumniated and injured him, we have had the curiosity to make such an examination, for the purpose of discovering if by chance any expression of the nature complained of had inadvertently made its way into our leading columns. We find that since the first of April, 1854, Mr. Smith has been four times spoken of in these columns. The first occasion was on April 7 of that year, when, in speaking of the previous day's debate on the Nebraska bill, in the House of Representatives, we stated that "Mr. Gerrit Smith of New York made a powerful speech against the bill." Next, on June 29, 1854, we announced his resignation of his seat in Congress in the following terms:—

"Gerrit Smith has resigned his seat in Congress, to take effect at the close of the present session. We regret this withdrawal. Mr. Smith is preëminently a patriot, a Christian, and a philanthropist ; and men of that stamp are scarce in either House."

Again, on July 15, 1854, in publishing from the *Utica Morning Herald* the extract from Mr. Smith's private letter about going to bed at nine o'clock, we made some remarks, of which the following is a specimen :—

"Mr. Smith now sees what it is to be misjudged by over-zealous compatriots, because he does not see the wisdom or good policy of doing just as they think best. Perhaps he may have declared or resolved other men 'traitors to liberty' ere now because they did not see fit to train in his troop. Now we are very sure Gerrit Smith is not and never can be at heart a 'traitor to liberty,' though he may err sadly in judgment, as we think he did at the time the Nebraska bill passed. His intentions were excellent, but he mistook his course."

Again, on August 11, 1854, in publishing Mr. Smith's address to his constituents we accompanied it with some perfectly kind and respectful comments, concluding in these words :—

"We publish Mr. Smith's Address, regretting that we cannot agree with the points of explanation or defence therein set forth by one who aims to be nothing but a defender of the universal rights of man."

Aside from these occasions, we do not find that either the *Tribune* or any of its correspondents, has spoken of Mr. Smith at all for the last year and upward, until a letter from Syracuse was admitted without complete scrutiny, a month or more ago, stating that he did not vote on the Nebraska bill ; that statement we promptly corrected when brought to our attention by a friend of Mr. Smith, who had written to him on the subject ; and if there are other articles respecting him which have escaped our notice, we are confident that there is nothing in them out of keeping with the friendly spirit exhibited in the extracts we have quoted. What folly is it, then, which urges him to assail and misrepresent us in such a gratuitous and groundless manner.

Mr. Smith goes into some new explanations on the question of his being absent from the attempt to stave off the Nebraska bill on the ground of its interfering with his bed-time. He contends with pompous complacency that we have failed to show that his desire to go to bed at nine o'clock had anything to do with his absence on that occasion, and maintains, with curious oblivion of his own former statements, that his only motive for refusing to engage in that contest was fidelity to the democratic principle. We accordingly waste no time on his puerile argument, but proceed directly to settle the question by his own evidence. The extract from a private letter of Mr. Smith, referred to above, reads as follows :—

"My friends and constituents need not be troubled by these things.

Should they not rejoice in them? Only a few months ago I was regarded on all hands as a too zealous Abolitionist. But now the Whigs and Democrats are driven so far ahead of me by this Nebraska impulse that they look back upon me and call me a 'traitor to liberty.' Other gentlemen of your County, to whom I referred, suggest that I can defend myself in the newspapers. But there are two things I have not time to do: one of these is to prove that I am a *real* Abolitionist; and the other that I am a *real* Temperance man. \* \* \* \* I declined entering into the physical strife—into the question which party could do the longest without eating and sleeping. Mr. Matteson thought I did wrong in not going with him into the contest of physical endurance. But so did most of the opponents of the Nebraska bill think me wrong in this respect. All of the technical Abolitionists thought that I did wrong; my excellent and beloved friends Chase and Sumner were deeply grieved that I stood aloof from that physical struggle. I am sure, however, that they would have been more deeply grieved had they seen me debase myself so far as to substitute their consciences for my own.

"It is not strange that, keeping up my country habits, going to bed at nine and rising at five, I should deny the right of Congress to have night sessions. Suppose our House had appointed three o'clock in the morning as the hour for taking the final vote on the Nebraska bill, I should not in that case have given my vote, for I should have felt it to be my duty to be in my bed at that hour. On whom would rest the responsibility of my absence and my missing vote? Some of my friends would say on myself, but I would say on the House.

"If my constituents wish for their Member of Congress one who can sit up all night, they should have elected a person of very different habits from my own; but if they wish for their Member of Congress one who can go longest without eating, they would have done better to have chosen an Indian, who is accustomed to go two or three days without eating, than a white man who is accustomed to eat his meals regularly every day."

Now, if this does not prove that at least one of the reasons why Mr. Smith was unwilling to join in the attempt to prevent the Nebraska bill from coming to a vote, was that he would not sit up for it, it does not prove anything. He may add to this as many other reasons as he pleases, and as many explanations as he can put together; but here we have this point clearly established. He would not sit up out of his regular hours, or go without his usual meals, to prevent the Nebraska bill from coming to a vote, or even to vote on it at the final division; and, if his constituents desired a representative to perform such feats, they should have chosen a man of corresponding habits. Such is the plain and undeniable tenor of Mr. Smith's own declarations. He may regret them; he certainly did sit up two hours after his usual bed-time to vote against the bill; but still these declarations are on record as containing at least one reason why he was unwilling to join with the other Anti-Nebraska men in the House during the decisive struggle;

and they cover with shame the foolish blather with which he occupies the latter part of his present letter to the *Tribune*.

We long ago expressed our opinion upon that very sensitive democratic conscience which would not allow Mr. Smith to join in resisting the will of the majority in the House, but he invites a repetition of it. We hold that his reason is the veriest fudge in the world. That was notoriously a corrupt majority, procured by the grossest bribery on the part of the Executive, and it was as much a duty to resist it by every practicable means as if it had been engaged in a violent attempt to overthrow the Constitution and establish a monarchy. The Pierce party had sprung the question upon the country, and in defiance of democratic principles were hurrying through their scheme before the people could have an opportunity to pronounce upon it. What the opposition contended for was that the people should be allowed to decide; and that a purchased Congress should not be suffered to take advantage of power confided to its members for very different purposes, to pervert and transform the Government. We think that if Mr. Smith's views of democracy had been a little more intelligent, he would have joined in the effort to prevent that outrage upon the rights of the majority of the people; but, unfortunately, sincerity is not always a sure defence against sophistry, and we all know in what quarter good intentions are employed as a pavement.

Mr. Smith desires us to publish his speech of April 6, in our advertising columns, and proffers the sum of \$500 as a compensation for that service. It is an old speech, and for that reason not particularly interesting; besides, its length is such that, at our usual rates for advertising, its insertion in all our editions would be worth no less than \$2,000; indeed, the mere white paper required to print it in the *Tribune* will cost us all that he proposes to pay; but such is our willingness to oblige him that we shall make the very considerable discount which his proposal will require; the speech will appear at as early a day as possible.

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### MR. SMITH'S THIRD LETTER.

PETERBORO, Aug. 18, 1855.

*To the New-York Tribune:*

I this evening receive your yesterday's sheet. But for one thing in it I should not feel at liberty to ask you to print another letter for me—not even this, which shall be little more than a handbreadth. You have dealt so justly with me in printing my two long letters; and your willingness to publish in all your editions, and for so insufficient a compensation, my speech on the Nebraska bill, is so liberal, that I am half ashamed to ask for any more space, however little, in your columns.

This one thing to which I have referred is your leaving your readers to believe that I departed from the truth in accusing you of assailing



my anti-slavery integrity whilst I was in Congress. Now, will you not be so good as to reprint a few of the lines in which you did assail it? A few lines will suffice. You can take them, if you please, from that editorial in which you speak of me as being the most radical Abolitionist ever sent to Congress, and nevertheless as giving signs of my betrayal of the anti-slavery cause. If you will comply with this request you will vindicate my veracity, and will save me from the necessity of vindicating it by the like means. I would give you the date of the editorials in question but that I keep no files of newspapers, and have to rely solely on my recollections to know what they have said of me.

Do this for me which I have now requested, and I will be content that you have had the last word in our controversy. Indeed, since you have admitted that I really did vote on the Nebraska bill, although I had to sit up until midnight in order to do so, and since, too, you are about to publish my speech on the bill, I think I can very well afford to leave unanswered all you say of my "vanity," and "want of brains," and "foolish blather." So, too, I can very well afford to leave unanswered your conclusion that my argument in favor of the rights of the majority is the "veriest fudge;" and so, too, I can very well afford to leave unanswered all you have made out, or can possibly make out of extracts from one of my private letters.

GERRIT SMITH.

## THE TRIBUNE'S REPLY.—SEPTEMBER 6th.

WE certainly have every disposition to oblige Mr. Smith, but we really can not quote as he desires from any former articles of ours assailing his anti-slavery integrity, for the reason that, so far as we are aware, we never published any such articles. We have already assured Mr. Smith of this fact, and yet here he comes again to the charge just as fresh as ever. Once more we repeat it: of Mr. Gerrit Smith's moral integrity, as an anti-slavery-man or otherwise, we never entertained nor expressed a doubt. We have also carefully examined a file of the *Tribune* for the past two years to see if any such expressions had, by any accident of which we were unconscious, made their way into our leading columns, but we could discover nothing of the sort; and we again assure Mr. Smith that, if there are any such, which we did not know at the time and can not find now, they do as much injustice to our opinion as to his character. That Mr. Smith is a knave, or any thing approaching a knave, is what we never thought; and if it has ever been said in our name, we desire most emphatically to disclaim the false utterance.

But what shall be said of the gentleman who on his own confession brings charges like those Mr. Smith has recently brought against the

*Tribune*, when at the same time he keeps no files of newspapers, and relies solely on his recollection to know what they have said of him? In our judgment the best that can be said of him is that he ought to be heartily ashamed of himself.

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## MR. SMITH'S FOURTH LETTER.

PETERBORO, *September 8, 1855.*

*To the New York Tribune :*

I little thought, when I wrote my last letter to you, that I should have to write you another; for I could not doubt, that you would comply with my very reasonable, my very moderate request. You had done much more than to impeach my memory. You had impeached my veracity. For, if, as you alleged, there is no truth in any of the things, which I brought against you; if you were right in saying: "False, Mr. Smith, every word of it!" it could only be because there is no truth in myself. I was willing to let you off on easy terms. I was willing to end the controversy, if you would put yourself to so little pains, so very little pains, as to reprint a few lines from one of your editorials. I promised to be content, if in this wise, and to this extent, you would vindicate my veracity. But, now, that you have not done it, I am compelled, as I intimated I would be, to do it myself. The lines referred to are in your sheet of June 7, 1854.

And, now, since I have had to look over your files for several months, in order to find the few lines, which I asked you to reprint, I will publish, in connection with them, numerous other passages, which met my eye, whilst searching for these few lines. I will not publish all the passages in your columns, which reflect upon my course in Congress. Of some that I saw, I made no note: and it was only about one quarter of your files from the time I took my seat in Congress until the present time, that I examined.

In these extracts from your columns, which will follow this letter, you cannot fail to see, and, that too, to your deep mortification and utter confusion, how flatly some of them contradict others. For instance, whilst some of them utter the falsehood, that I did not vote on the Nebraska bill, others of them stoutly and indignantly deny, that the falsehood is to be found in your columns.

Some of my extracts, as you will see, are from your correspondence: and, because they are, you will, perhaps, refuse to acknowledge yourself responsible for them. However this may be, sure I am, that the public will agree with me, that this is a case, in which your responsibility for what your correspondents have said is no less than for what your editors have said. For in this case your correspondents have but fallen in with your editors; and not only have they been countenanced and encouraged by your editors, but the instance



is not wanting in which they have been expressly defended by them. Even that correspondent, whose shameless slanders you published the fourth of last July, found you coming to his relief and substantial justification. For correspondents whose slanders you condemn, I admit, you are not responsible. But for the communicated slanders, which are invited by similar editorial slanders, and also by various other editorial abuse—slanders, moreover, which you either indorse by your silence, or expressly confirm—for such slanders certainly you are no less amenable than for those, which are concocted in your editorial closets.

And now, that you have compelled me to write you another letter, pardon me for improving the occasion to call your attention to the three ways in which you have met me in this controversy; and to ask you whether these were the reasonable and candid ways, in which it was proper to meet me.

1st. You have quoted against indubitable evidence of what I actually did in Congress on the Nebraska bill, my conjectures of what I would have done in other circumstances. These conjectures you found in disjointed extracts from a playful private letter, written in answer to questions which you never knew, and which I do not remember; and written too, you know not how long, and I know not how long (for the extracts bear no date,) after the Congressional struggle on that bill was all over.

2d. Finding it easier to rail at me and to vilify me than to argue with me, you have turned aside from the argument to cover me all over with reproach and ridicule. Not content with calling me a reckless and passionate man, a vain man, and an eccentric man, if not, indeed, a downright madman, you have carried your unkind exposure of my poor self so far, as to inform the public, that my head is absolutely destitute of brains.

3d. The other of the three ways has been to deny, broadly and utterly, not only that you ever assailed my anti-slavery fidelity, but that you ever misrepresented my course on the Nebraska bill.

The simple truth, Mr. *Tribune*, is, that you did a very wrong thing in misrepresenting my course and character in Congress; and that you are doing a still worse thing in denying the misrepresentation. Strong in the sympathy and support of a great party, and in the almost illimitable power of your types, you feel safe in treating an individual as you will. And, indeed, you are safe, where the individual has so little popularity and influence as I have:—safe, I mean, from all that, which a vulgar mind might apprehend—from all such danger, as the loss of patronage, or the loss of votes. For, in these respects, and in every similar respect, I could not harm you, if I would. Nevertheless, to be safe from consequences of this description is but very little, however much the vulgar mind might covet such safety. I thank God, that there is a nobler order of mind, which feels no safety but in truth, and prizes no advantage, however great, which is obtained by wrong. May you yet give proof, that your own mind is of this nobler order! Much proof to that end will there be in your ingenuous confession of the errors, into which you have been

tempted. The warm desire of my heart is, that such proof may not long be lacking.

You blame me for relying "solely" on my "recollection," in carrying on this controversy with you. I do not wonder at your poor opinion of my memory. Considering, indeed, that you speak of me as absolutely brainless, how can you regard me as having any memory at all? In my second letter, I reminded you of the danger of judging of your opponent's abilities, in the light of your own vilifications of him; and now, in this matter of my memory, you have afforded a striking instance of such danger. Such a habit had you got into of caricaturing my poor head, that you came, at last, to believe in your caricatures. This reflex influence upon ourselves of our attempts to deceive others is not uncommon. That men become dupes of their own dupes is, in fact, among the surest retributions.

Another and very striking illustration of our liability to fall ourselves under the power of the deceptions, which we practise on others, is to be seen in some of your representations of my course on the Nebraska bill. You had tried so hard to put me in a false position toward the bill, that you evidently came at last to believe, that I really occupied it. For instance, who can doubt, that, when you wrote what I have extracted from your sheet of July 15, 1854, you did actually believe, that I failed to vote on the bill? To say otherwise of you is to make you a thousand-fold worse than deluded. I am now fully persuaded, that, for many months, you yourself believed what you are mainly responsible for hundreds of thousands believing, namely, that I did not vote on the Nebraska bill.

But to return to my memory. Perhaps, it is too poor to be justified in trusting itself without your files, in a controversy about your files, with you, who have them. I have no praises to bestow upon it. I wish it were a better memory. Nevertheless, I am confident, that there is now one newspaper, which will never again be disposed to put the powers of that memory to the test. But, pray what shall be said of *your* memory, which not only could not recollect what you had published against me, but which, even after a fresh examination of your files, and a fresh reading of what you had published against me, could, nevertheless, by no possibility, be brought to recollect it? There are memories of a twofold infirmity—memories, that neither can, nor will, retain what they prefer not to retain. A less generous person than myself would, perhaps, impute to you a memory of that sort.

You say that I ought "to be heartily ashamed" of myself. But sure I am that the public, after reading the extracts, will say that the party, which ought "to be heartily ashamed," is you, who have the hardihood to confront the abounding testimony of your own columns—and not I, who am so triumphantly sustained by that testimony, in every particular.

You will see among the extracts your admission, that the vote on the Nebraska bill was not taken, until half past eleven o'clock. An important admission this in the face of the repeated declarations of your columns, that not even to vote against the Nebraska bill would I keep out of bed after nine o'clock.

GERRIT SMITH.

# EXTRACTS FROM THE COLUMNS

OF THE

## NEW-YORK TRIBUNE.

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MARCH 14, 1854.—“I will let you know when he (Senator Douglas) succeeds in pulling the wool over the eyes of the Northern opponents of the measure, so far as to accomplish his object. Mr. Gerrit Smith, being a peace man and a non-resistant, may yield to his suggestion.”—*Washington Correspondent*.

MARCH 31, 1854.—“The opponents of the Nebraska Bill here are at a loss to understand the votes of Gerrit Smith and Mr. Haven of your State on the incidental questions, etc. \* \* \* They seem to study to vote to thwart the purposes of those who would defeat the bill.”—*Special Dispatch from Washington*.

MAY 12, 1854.—“Mr. Gerrit Smith’s peculiar mental idiosyncrasy may prevent him from coöperating in necessary measures of opposition (to the Nebraska Bill;) but we cannot believe it of any man of hard sense in the House who really desires to defeat the scoundrel scheme.”—*Editorial*.

MAY 12, 1854.—The Whigs fight well, but they are not heartily sustained by the other opponents of the bill.” [Gerrit Smith is named among these heartless opponents of the bill.]—*Special Dispatch from Washington*.

MAY 15, 1854.—“Does any moderate conservative Northern man doubt the policy of offering a little gentle resistance to this brilliant system of measures by way of calling the yeas and nays a few extra times on Nebraska? Perhaps such a very peaceable gentleman as Mr. Gerrit Smith may hang fire at the proposition; but is there any other Northern man, whose head and pluck are good and sound, who can retire before the inconceivable pusillanimity of a suggestion that such a course is unwise? We presume not. We do not know for a certainty that Mr. Smith occupies the position we assign to him. If he does, all we can say is, that he had better resign his seat at the earliest possible moment, and let his constituents elect somebody in his place who will do his duty among sinners, and not go for applying millennium tactics in a body like the House of Representatives at Washington.”—*Editorial*.

MAY 15, 1854.—“Gerrit Smith, as every body admits, acts from strictly conscientious motives; and although, as most of his friends think, he mistakes the proper course sometimes, no one is uncharitable enough to condemn him.”

"Charles Sumner has entered into all the plans to defeat the iniquity with zeal and heartiness. He told Gerrit Smith that if the bill passed as was proposed without discussion, he should hold him responsible for it."—*Washington Correspondent*, entitled "*Our Own Correspondent*."

MAY 23, 1854.—"At half-past eleven o'clock (last night) the bill (Nebraska Bill) passed by a vote of 113 to 100."—*Editorial*.

JUNE 7, 1854.—"Ordinarily it is a gone case with a Northern man when he gets badly complimented by gentlemen from the South. It is usually but the initiatory step toward swallowing him. We are not sure that we have not lost, during the present session, by this process the most radical abolitionist ever sent to Congress. But in regard to Judge Wade, no fear of this lamentable result will be felt in any quarters where he is known."—*Editorial*.

JUNE 19, 1854.—"The Hon. Gerrit Smith not only declines a reelection, but is understood to contemplate resigning his seat in the present Congress because of ill health. We regret this, although Mr. Smith has become exceedingly popular with the Slavery Extensionists—even those of them who are not invited to his dinners. Their flattery might perhaps embarrass and puzzle, but could not possibly corrupt him."—*Editorial*.

JULY 15, 1854.—"Now we are sure that Gerrit Smith is not and never can be at heart a traitor to liberty—though he may err sadly in judgment, as we think he did at the time the Nebraska Bill was passed. \* \* \*

"Health and life are desirable, but duty is before them both; and while it may be wrong in the majority to protract a sitting through the night, and force the final vote to an unreasonable hour, we do not see how that wrong excuses a member from standing by it to the last. The spirit in which a great wrong is met by its leading opponents is of the greatest consequence; it electrifies or paralyzes thousands; and many will hastily conclude that a pro-slavery measure which Gerrit Smith did not see fit to lose sleep to vote against, cannot be very important or dangerous. That was a mistake, Mr. Smith; and we think you will live to realize it."—*Editorial*.

JULY 24, 1854.—"What a sad failure Gerrit Smith has made in Congress! And what a feeble apology he renders for his short-comings! The great Abolition orator, whose thunders at a distance shook the pillars of slavery, and startled its sentinels in their ceaseless round, becomes pusey and harmless upon a closer inspection. This mighty adversary of the 'peculiar institution' excused his delinquency by pleading his country custom of going to bed at nine o'clock! Alas! little hath slavery to fear from an enemy who goes to bed at nine o'clock. The chief villainies of the world are concocted and executed after that hour; and the patriot and Christian who would defeat the machinations of the enemies of liberty must keep later vigils, and, if he sleeps at all, sleep with one eye unclosed. The twenty-third Congressional District will be represented by a stouter foe to slavery extension in the next House than Gerrit Smith has proved himself."—*Syracuse Correspondent*.

AUGUST 11, 1854.—"Mr. Smith begins (his letter to his constituents, dated August 7, 1854,) by defending the compliments he paid to his slaveholding opponents in the exordium of his first speech, (in Congress) which, among other things, his friends have animadverted upon. We suppose these compliments must have been in a Pickwickian sense, and let them pass with the simple remark that doughfaces have complimented the South, etc. \* \* \*

"We shall let his (Mr. Smith's) defense of his not remaining to vote on



the bill speak for itself. \* \* \* Though he may vote against the night sessions, yet, when the majority rules it, he, according to his own logic, has no right to go to bed."—*Editorial*.

[NOTE.—The declaration that Mr. Smith complimented slaveholders and defended himself for it, has, as the papers here referred to will show, not the least foundation in truth; and the declaration that he defended himself for not voting on the bill, which he did vote on in all its stages, is, of course, sheer nonsense.]

JULY 4, 1855.—"Gerrit Smith is really the leader, (of the Radical Abolitionists,) though I think since his *failure* in Congress, his influence is on the wane. His want of back-bone on the night of the passage of the Nebraska Bill, and his lame excuse that he was in the habit of going to bed at nine o'clock, lost him troops of friends everywhere, as well among Radical Abolitionists as in other parties."—*Correspondent at Syracuse*.

JULY 16, 1855.—"The friends of Mr. Gerrit Smith complain of our publishing in THE TRIBUNE the following passage in a letter from Syracuse, commenting on the Convention of Radical Abolitionists lately held there:

"'Gerrit Smith is really the leader, though I think since his failure in Congress his influence is on the wane. His want of back-bone on the night of the passage of the Nebraska bill, and his lame excuse—that he was in the habit of going to bed at nine o'clock—lost him troops of friends everywhere, as well among Radical Abolitionists as in other parties.'

"This paragraph certainly does Mr. Smith some injustice, but is rather verbal than real. The fact is that he was present in the House of Representatives 'on the night of the passage of the Nebraska bill,' and *voted against it*; but, on the other hand, this division was only formal, and simply recorded a foregone conclusion. When the real battle on that bill took place in the House, in the prolonged and stormy session of May 11, 1854, and when the opposition were contending with the most admirable gallantry, and using all the parliamentary means at their command to prevent the bill from being brought to a vote at all—then it was that Mr. Smith abandoned the field of honor and, as we think, of duty, in order not to encroach upon his peaceful habit of going to bed at nine o'clock. As this was the decisive struggle, and its conclusion settled the question that the bill must pass, our correspondent, though literally in error, was hardly so in point of fact. We think, however, that he was entirely wrong in charging Mr. Smith with want of back-bone. There is certainly no such deficiency in his constitution. He has his own peculiarities, and it is often very difficult to determine what ground he will occupy in regard to any public question before he takes his position. Possibly he did not equal the expectations of his friends while he was in Congress, though it is not strictly correct to say that his course in that body was a 'failure.' Those who have been most intimate with Mr. Smith and his career suffered no great disappointment. He turned out to be about what was expected."—*Editorial*.

JULY 28, 1855.—"Not very long ago, a correspondent of THE TRIBUNE at Syracuse spoke of Mr. Smith as having failed to vote against the Nebraska Bill, because it was his rule to go to bed at nine o'clock. This statement having been brought to our notice by a friend of Mr. Smith's, we at once corrected it, and repeated the notorious fact—often before prominently published in these columns, and never contradicted there until this Syracuse letter—that Mr. Smith was present at the final division on the Nebraska Bill and voted against it. \* \* \*

"For instance, he charges that we have till now concealed the fact that

he voted against the Nebraska Bill, when the truth is, that it was published most prominently at the time, and that, so far as we are aware, nothing has ever been said or insinuated to the contrary in our columns until this unlucky letter from Syracuse. \* \* \*

"It was in his (Mr. Smith's) heart but accidentally not in his act to fail to vote against the bill."—*Editorial*.

AUGUST 17, 1855.—"Mr. Smith, with a reckless and passionate haste which we rebuked but too mildly, charged us in his former letter with being the chief and most responsible propagator of the calumny that he did not vote on the Nebraska Bill. We denied that this charge possessed any foundation whatever. \* \* \* Mr. Smith ought to be ashamed of himself for repeating on such silly grounds accusations which we positively deny, and for the truth of which no proof can be brought. \* \* \*

"But here we have this point clearly established. He would not sit up out of his regular hours, or go without his usual meals to prevent the 'Nebraska Bill' from coming to a vote, or even to vote on it at the final division."—*Editorial*.









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